

In the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 2, line 2 with the following rewritten paragraph:

Q1 This is a continuation of US Patent Application Serial No. 09/143,289, filed on August 28, 1998, now U.S. Patent No. 6,150,257, titled "Plasma Treatment of an Interconnect Surface During Formation of an Interlayer Dielectric," which is incorporated herein by reference.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 9, line 11 with the following rewritten paragraph:

Q2 In reference to Figure 2, prevention or reduction of the likelihood of oxidation of upper surface 16 of interconnect 12 is accomplished during the formation of ILD layer 18. This is carried out by an in situ passivation of upper surface 16 of interconnect 12, immediately prior to or simultaneously with the formation of ILD layer 18, that avoids the problems of the prior art.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 10, line 4 with the following rewritten paragraph:

93 The chemical compound is provided in an amount sufficient to substantially chemically cover upper surface 16 of interconnect 12 in order to chemically protect approximately the first 1-1,000 atomic lattice layers thereof. The chemical compound may be a nitride form of the metal of which interconnect 12 is composed. Where ammonia, a hydrated nitrogen compound or the like is used, a chemical structure such as $M-N-H_x$ forms, where M represents the metal of which interconnect 12, is composed.